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How Truman Clinched The Nomination for The Man He Was Determined to Block

A Serious Moment at the (Democratic) Circus

As we went to press, it seemed to be all over but the official count. One miracle, perhaps two, had occurred in that honky-tonk in Chicago. The best man had won and a last minute party split over civil rights had been avoided. Despite Harry Truman, gleeful as a small boy bent on mischief, or perhaps because of him, the Democrats seemed to have cleared the way for the nomination of Adlai Stevenson virtually by acclamation. By some mystic process, from the same assemblage which had whooped and hollered over Governor Clement, probably the greatest hog-caller since Demosthenes, there had emerged as the candidate a civilized and literate man. Not since Paley's watch has theology been provided with a better argument that there must be a Higher Power, higher that is even than Sam Rayburn, who can tote up 6,942 votes faster by ear than the ordinary Southerner can say Dixiecrat, yet always come out with a majority against Northern radicals. Endless were the wonders on display at this convention. What God wrought in Rayburn alone could never be matched by UNIVAC.

Early on the morning of the day for the nominations, the chief impressions left by the intra-party struggle were the pettiness of Truman and the magnanimity of Estes Kefauver. A piqued vanity and an old slight were easily visible beneath the rationalizations of the ex-President. The politician so concerned with the party's chances was prepared to ruin them out of spite. The man who was worried lest the Democrats turn conservative executed a maneuver that threatened for a few hours to make Lyndon Johnson its arbiter, to hand it over to the leadership of the Texas gas and oil interests, to give the man who works in scandalous congeniality with Knowland in the Senate the power to dictate terms to Stevenson or ditch him for Symington. The danger was so obvious that the maneuver boomeranged; thanks in no small part to Walter Reuther, a new Northern bandwagon movement to Stevenson started as a swift rescue operation. Truman assured the candidacy he was determined to block.

Truman Wanted A Cold Warrior

There never was a phonier issue than this one of moderation. A multimillionaire disguised as a Jacobin, practically a Bolshevik, the fattest fat cat in the party, the Union Pacific's gift to Leftism, was trotted out as the man to carry on the permanent revolution, Vladimir Averillovitch Harriman. His sponsor, for all the engaging qualities which won our affections in Washington, always was full of helium; the contrast between Truman's campaign speeches and what he actually did in office is not easily forgotten by those who lived through it at close range. The memory made all those convention tears about the poor small business man and the poor farmer unusually saline. Truman's chief principle in practice often seemed to be government by crony, and this reached its climax in the elevation to the Supreme Court of Clark and Minton, the two most ignorant men ever appointed to the high bench, mainstays of all those reactionary interests Truman is always flailing. Immoderation in speech was never more deliberately confused with radicalism in action. And in the background was a real issue, though carefully hidden, Truman's fear that Stevenson unlike Harriman is not wedded to the cold war, nor like the Aviation Lobby's Symington to the virtues of perpetual inflation via a perpetual arms race. Truman's defeat at Chicago was in this respect a victory for peace.

The real test of a fighter is one that Truman failed at Chicago. It is easy to wield a bladder on the heads of the opposing forces; it is hard to press the issues that infuriate one's own side. The man who was so ready to "give 'em hell", who regards this as a prescription for victory, turned up an appeaser lamb at the platform committee on the only real issue before the convention—civil rights. Here the strutting little bantam from Missouri might have made a memorable last performance in American politics. All his prestige as an ex-President and his regular guy popularity might have been put to service in awakening the nation to the inescapable; an atmosphere in which it has suddenly become dangerous to defend the Supreme Court, a situation which gives the lie so vividly to all that campaign oratory and national myth about the equality of man, were challenges to a fighter. Truman ducked them, more anxious to outflank Stevenson and win the South for Symington than to make a final contribution of statesmanship in a world where an awakening majority of colored men eye us with cool detachment. Their judgment will determine our future.

Senator Foghorn Come to Life

The way in which the issue of civil rights transformed the sweaty scene in the early hours of last Thursday was a measure of its urgent reality. Until that time the convention was a spectacle of such clownishness as to make one wonder whether TV will not end by ruining political conventions as it ruined McCarthy. What the professional politician takes as a joke now comes into the parlor of the average home as serious political discussion, and as such must be appalling. The keynoter Clement was nauseating; to compare him with William Jennings Bryan was an insult to the memory of one who still practiced oratory, however inflated, in the classic and literate tradition. The paraphrase of the cross of gold passage in Clement's performance was atrocious; his attacks on the President were so

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Moscow's Geography Shows Itself As Flexible as Imperialist Morality

Morocco, Yemen and the Sudan Are "Adjacent" to Suez But Not Israel

The most disturbing aspect of the Suez conference on the eve of its opening in London was the terrible isolation of Israel. For all the talk about international morality not one Power, not England, not the U. S., not Russia, nor India suggested that Israel be invited. Shepilov's note from Moscow spoke of the failure to invite "Arab states whose territories are directly adjacent to the Canal" and therefore "vitally interested" and then proceeded to mention among others Morocco, which is several thousand miles away at the other and Western end of Africa, and Yemen, which is at the other end of the Red Sea. But Israel, the only country whose territory *is* adjacent to Egyptian Sinai and Suez was passed over by Moscow's eye, as if it did not exist. Soviet geography seems to be as flexible as imperialist morality.

We Wonder Why Dept.

From a New York Times background story (Aug. 10) explaining the "juridical" difference between the Suez and Panama canals: "The United States considers the [Panama] waterway so vital to its interests . . . that it never has indicated any serious intention of relinquishing control. . . . The little state of Panama . . . never has seriously displayed any aim to repossess the Canal that traverses its land. Nor has any other nation."

Of course, our own Mr. Dulles, who usually oozes moralisms at every pore, did not suggest Israel be asked. In an adjoining column we give in the full flavor of actual text the cold-blooded replies of Eden's Under Secretary for Foreign Affairs in the House of Commons when asked about Israel. Only in the French National Assembly was Nasser's discrimination against ships bound for Israel included in the official motion of protest passed by the Assembly and M. Bidault for the MRP declared that failure to react against Egypt's ban on Israel's shipping had emboldened Nasser to go further.

Shepilov protested indignantly in his note to London against the by-passing of the UN, but what better example of "by-passing" than one Shepilov does not mention—the way Egypt has been allowed to violate the August, 1951, resolution of the Security Council? And what more ignominous example of cowardly scuttle than the way the British government reacted in 1951 after the Egyptians fired on the British ship Empire Roach bound with a cargo of arms for *Jordan* through Suez and Akaba? The British response was to legalize the unlawful blockade by arranging for search and clearance of such vessels in the future by the Egyptian authorities at Suez. Ships of many nations bound for Israel (and in that case even Jordan) have been stopped or fired upon with impunity. It is only when the great oil companies are aroused by fear of nationalization that Egypt becomes a matter of concern for these purveyors of international law and morality.

Second Thoughts in Britain

"After a week of mobilization, punctuated by plethoric grunts of triumph by Tory back-benchers, one insidious little question insistently intrudes itself upon the British public. What exactly is all this force meant to achieve? . . . No one denies that if Nasser were to block the passage of ships in the Canal, the nation against which he discriminated would have the legal right to send warships into the Canal. (This right remains a right even though it is only now, when Britain's own position is threatened, that we criticize Egypt for its long continued and flagrantly illegal discrimination against Israel.) But if Nasser does not stop the free passage in the Canal—and the government cannot bank on his being foolish enough to do so—what really is intended? . . . Nasser cannot be compelled to 'denationalize' the Suez company as if it were so much British steel."

—Kingsley Martin in London New Statesman, Aug. 11

Britain Cold Shoulders Israel

SIR ROBERT BOOTHBY asked whether in view of the aggressive action taken by the Egyptian government in respect of the Suez canal, Her Majesty's government would reconsider their decision not to allow the government of Israel to purchase such arms as they considered necessary for the effective defense of Israel.

LORD JOHN HOPE said . . . the Government saw no reason to change their policy about the supply of arms to the Middle East.

SIR R. BOOTHBY.—Does the Under Secretary really mean to tell us that in the light of the present situation the Government are to make no change in their policy of refusing certain classes of modern arms to Israel . . . and that they do not recognize any difference in the situation that has arisen in the last few days?

LORD JOHN HOPE.—No. . . .

MR. SHINWELL said . . . if Israel had been properly supplied, the present impasse over Egypt might have been avoided.

LORD JOHN HOPE said that in the government's view a balance had been struck—(cries of "No!"). . . .

MR. JOHN STRACHEY.—Has not the Government's policy amounted to arming their enemies and penalizing their friends?

LORD JOHN HOPE.—No.

MR. SYDNEY SILVERMAN.—Do the Government realize that if they had taken a firm attitude when the Suez Canal was first closed to Israeli shipping, they would be in a very much stronger position to handle their difficulties today? (Opposition cheers.)

[To this there was no answer by Lord John Hope.]

—House of Commons, August 1.

The most tragic part of Israel's isolation is that as an Asian country she would under other circumstances be on Egypt's side in this dispute. So long as the interests of Sudan in Aswan and of the world in Suez are protected—and Nasser has not yet violated either—Egypt clearly has a right to use these revenues if it can for projects of this kind, which could mean so much to her poverty-stricken people. In the long run nothing can be better for Israel than greater stability and prosperity in the Arab East. Nasser is not a Hitler; he has gone out of his way on several occasions to demonstrate publicly a friendly attitude toward the Jews of Egypt. Egypt's needs for development and Israel's need for peace might have been linked in a magnanimous program big enough to take care of Arab refugees and Arab pride. But the path ahead leads in quite a different direction, and the cowardly slighting of Israel at London by all sides will be requited painfully by all, in that weakening of the UN and of respect for law on which the fate of great Powers as well as small ultimately depends.

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New York's Anti-Informer School Decision and Some Mysteries of Pedagogy

What Does the 20th Congress Have to Do With The 1st Amendment?

The curtain has just rung down on another scene in the comic ballet over at the Subversive Activities Control Board. Last Spring the Supreme Court returned to it the case of the Communist party. It was returned on the ground that the testimony of three perjurers had been used in arriving at the order requiring the party to register as subversive. The three were Paul Crouch, Manning Johnson and Harvey Matusow.

The Board has now stricken the testimony of all three from the record, and reaffirmed its decision. This was hardly a surprise, since the Board operates under a statute—the only one of its kind—which virtually gives the name and address of the culprit to be convicted under it.

The Communist party, in a new delaying action, had asked the right to present evidence that since the 20th Congress there no longer was a world Communist movement as defined in the Act, and that it was now independent of Moscow.

The Board declined to hear the evidence and ruled that the reality of the change could only be tested "in the crucible of time." This was like sending a man to jail with the consoling observation that time would tell whether he was guilty or not. If due process is still due process, we think the Board will find this case thrown back in its lap by the courts.

We ourselves don't see what the 20th Congress has to do with the First Amendment. Whether the Communist party is or is not a faithful echo of Moscow is something to be hammered out in free political controversy, not to be decided by calling in the cops. The new legal issue begs the question. Can the government in a supposedly free society label certain parties and their publications "subversive", make them wear a yellow badge and reduce their members to second class status? Can such registration be reconciled with the Bill of Rights? The question which concerns us is not whether Stalin is dead but whether Jefferson still lives.

Pedagogic Witchcraft

Two New York newspapers used the same metaphor last week in deploring a decision by the State Commissioner of Education that ex-Communist teachers cannot be dismissed for refusing to inform.

The *Journal-American* found the decision "intolerable" because in the public school "Communist poison can be injected subtly into the minds of the young." The *World-Telegram* argued, "suppose you were a teacher and saw somebody slipping poison into children's lunch boxes? You'd report that person. Now is there any less reason to report somebody slipping poison into children's minds. Make no mistake about it —a Communist teacher can do exactly that by slanting practically any subject."

This metaphor implies that while other teachers grow prematurely gray trying to drum such comparatively simple matters as the multiplication table into the heads of their little charges, Communist teachers have some mysterious means for slipping the complex subtleties of Marxism-Leninism unobserved into the same tender skulls. One method seems to be analogous to intravenous injection—they "slip" it into the child mind. Another seems to be by means of a diabolic gift only Communist teachers are assumed to possess, since they can do this "by slanting practically any subject."

We pause, avid for more detail, over that "practically any subject." How do they do it in Latin? By blaming the conjugations on capitalism? Or in geology? By hinting that the rocks are bigger in the Soviet Union?

Pro-Communism Charges Ruled Libellous Unless Proven Factual and Fair Comment

A decision of importance in the fight against blacklisting was that handed down last week by Justice Saul Streit of the New York Supreme Court in the $500,000 suit brought by John Henry Faulk, CBS commentator, against Aware, Inc., Vincent Hartnett and Laurence A. Johnson, the Syracuse, N. Y., grocer.

Justice Streit, in rejecting preliminary motions to dismiss, laid down some helpful law in this field and "distinguished" the Faulk suit from that which Joe Julian lost 7-2 in the New York Court of Appeals last month against the publishers of Red Channels. We published the first analysis of the Julian decision (as yet unreported officially) in our issue of July 30 and here give the heart of Streit's ruling:

"In Mencher v. Chesley, 297 NY 94, our Court of Appeals held that a false charge that one is a Communist is libelous and that 'it is of little moment whether the statement describes plaintiff as a Communist or as one having Communistic sympathies and affiliations, for "any difference is one of degree only" (Grant v. Reader's Digest, supra, p. 735, per Learned Hand, C.J.).' . . .

"In the instant case, Exhibit A [Aware, Inc. Bulletin of February 10, 1956] . . . states that plaintiff was one of the 'middle of the road' slate of officers elected by AFTRA [American Federation of Television and Radio Artists] a short time earlier, and that plaintiff had been quoted as saying that 'all (middlers) were chosen for their opposition to Communism.' It goes on to say: 'In most cases, this may well be true. But how about [John Henry] Faulk himself? What is his public record?' . . .

"In the court's opinion, the enumeration of plaintiff's various types of participation in activities sponsored by Communist front organizations . . . may reasonably be understood as charging that 'plaintiff was either a Communist or that he cooperated in Communistic activities . . .' (Mencher v. Chesley). . . . In the Court's opinion, the contents of this article, assuming they are untrue, as alleged in the complaint, defame and libel plaintiff.

"The recent decision of the Court of Appeals in Julian v. American Business Consultants, Inc. (July 11, 1956, not yet officially reported), is not authority to the contrary. . . . In that case the only references to the plaintiff were found on one page of a book of 213 pages [Red Channels]. . . . The Court of Appeals declared, 'The reference to plaintiff, when read together with the introduction and purpose statement of Part II, are not susceptible of a libelous interpretation.'

"The last statement of the foregoing quotation related to the statement in Part II of the book that 'many prominent actors and artists have been inveigled to lend their names . . . to organizations espousing Communist causes . . . regardless of whether they actually believe in, sympathize with or even recognize the caused advanced.' . . . In the instant case there is absent a statement . . . indicating that the . . . plaintiff might have been . . . a person who advanced the Communist cause innocently. . . ."

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The Convention Came to Life Over Civil Rights

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cheap that if repeated they will only make votes for Eisenhower. That this combination rock-and-roller and revivalist should have been chosen as keynoter makes one dubious of the whole Democratic higher command. Is there no one with good taste in it? Clement was Al Capp's Senator Foghorn come to life straight out of Little Abner. His runner up, Kerr of Oklahoma, was painful where Clement was emetic; Kerr's jokes were elephantine, his toothy self-satisfaction whenever he drew applause was ludicrous; he sounded like an old fashioned medicine man who had been drinking too much of his own peruna, in short he bore a striking recemblance to the late W. C. Fields, may his gifted soul rest in peace.

Westinghouse for President

When the readings of the platform began, it sounded like more of the same, though the prose had been brushed up and had its wilder hairs plastered down. The attacks on the Republican party as responsible for all calamity from the Suez and Cyprus back to the Flood and the Fall of Man were lushly conventional, as were the magnificent promises to give the farmer—and everyone else—100 percent of parity or its equivalent. One had the distinct feeling that if General Motors were not in the Eisenhower Cabinet, the Democrats would have promised three cars in every garage. The caterwauling rhythms of the speakers provided fit music for so flatulent a libretto, and for the first time in our experience the commercials came over TV as pleasant, urbane and instructive interludes. Like so many other viewers, we began to think that man from Westinghouse might after all be the best candidate. He seemed so intelligent.

And then came civil rights. It must have been hard in that late, hot and weary hour to see what the issue was, or why the platform was so important; except for the more conscientous editorial writers, no one reads platforms anyway. But for a moment the stage was taken by men who burned with a passionate sincerity. Lehman, mustering his strength for the effort, was unforgettable, trembling with an emotion the great human issue deserved. But McCormack on the other side spoke with equal heat and intensity; he shook his fist, he reread the majority draft. "Under the law and Constitution," he read, and then shouted triumphantly, "Both are in here." So fearless were the drafters. Truman came on to say his piece too, and turned it characteristically into boasting. In a few moments, it was all over. The "ayes" were called. Rayburn declared the platform as written had won. A rollcall was denied. The radicals had at least made their showing, but one wondered afterwards at the careful management; no Southerner took part and no Negro spoke until it was over. Then Dawson of Illinois was introduced for the closing speech. At first this seemed a moving tribute to the Negro race, but the longer one listened the more one suspected a subtler purpose, a deflating demonstration in equality. The black man proved as big a windbag as the white.

Lamont Victory Over McCarthy

New York—In a unanimous opinion, but with a striking difference, the Federal Court of Appeals here has unanimously upheld District Judge Weinfeld's decision dismissing the indictments of Corliss Lamont, Abraham Unger and Albert Shadowitz for contempt of the McCarthy committee.

The difference is that Chief Judge Charles E. Clark (with Judges Hincks and Waterman) acted on much broader grounds. Judge Weinfeld's decision was purely technical—that the indictments were defective in not alleging "wilful" refusal to answer and in failing to show a specific resolution delegating authority to the McCarthy subcommittee of the Senate Government Operations Committee. But the Court of Appeals held that neither the parent committee nor the subcommittee had any power under the Legislative Reorganization Act of 1946 to inquire into subversive activities.

"How a committee to promote retrenchment and efficiency in governmental operations," Judge Clark ruled, referring to the functions assigned to the committee by the 1946 act, "is going to be aided in any way by an inquiry as to the length of time spent by a private writer on a trip to Russia must remain undisclosed. The latest ruling of the Supreme Court seems clearly to forbid so extensive, if not purposeless, an invasion of the rights of the individual."

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